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THE
Commonweal

The New Pluralism: From Nostalgia to Reality

DANIEL CALLAHAN

Hobbling the Constitution

WALTER DEAN BURNHAM

The Author as Fiction

WILFRID SHEED

THE CHURCH AND FREEDOM • A BRUCE MARSHALL NOVEL
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VOLUME LXXVIII, NO. 20 SEPTEMBER 6, 1963 TWENTY-FIVE CENTS

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CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

SEPTEMBER 26-28, 1963

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THE COMMONWEAL
232 Madison Avenue, New York 16, N.Y.

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Second-class postage paid in Norwalk, Conn. Printed in the U.S.A. and published weekly, except biweekly from mid-July to mid-September, at 116 Main St., Norwalk, Conn., by The Commonweal Publishing Co., Inc., 232 Madison Ave., New York 16, N.Y. MUrray Hill 3-2042. Copyright © 1963 The Commonweal Publishing Co., Inc. U.S. and Canada, $8 a year. Foreign, $10. Single copies 25¢.

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THE COMMONWEAL

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, LITERATURE AND THE ART

China Prospect

IT APPEARS extremely fortunate that the present upheaval in South Vietnam is taking place at a moment when Communist China finds itself weakened and isolated. The Southeast Asia rice bowl is a standing temptation to an aggressive Chinese regime hard-pressed to feed its seven hundred millions. With South Vietnam now torn from within and the defenses of neighboring Laos under such pressure, the whole area is in great peril.

Whether it will fall to Chinese conquest depends in large measure on the authenticity of the present split between the Soviets and the Chinese. How far-reaching is the dispute? It would hardly seem the part of wisdom to dismiss their quarrel lightly on the ground that it has to do only with means rather than their common aim for the world. At the other extreme, it would be unwise to assume that the long-awaited confrontation expected from rival claims to sparsely inhabited Mongolia is actually at hand.

Strategy is at issue. Mao, basing his tactics on his own path to success and present status, contends that the underdeveloped lands of Africa, Asia and Latin America provide the focus for effective revolutionary activity. Khrushchev would instead demonstrate the world over his success in producing military and political strength and a plenitude of goods and services. Whereas China tends to go by certain older Marxist tenets, the Soviet Union and its adherents hold that capitalism can no longer go in for imperialistic wars of conquest and that any attempt at a "revolutionary settlement of accounts with capitalism" makes little sense in a thermonuclear world. The two differ sharply over the efficacy of "peaceful coexistence."

It is hardly surprising, then, that the signing of the test-ban treaty set in motion a flurry of bitter charges and countercharges. The dispute has been exacerbated by such disclosures as that of Russia's broken promise of aid to China in atomic armament and *Izvestia's* of China's serious food shortages. The cordialities of Khrushchev's visit to Tito paralleled the snubbing of Chinese representatives. Potentially more important is China's racial appeal to the non-Caucasian world, from which Russia would be excluded.

ALL THIS GOES far beyond mere heated words and diplomatic gestures. It is reflected in the cutting off of Soviet *matériel.* Because of the failure to provide Mao with sample atomic weapons and specifications, China's development as a major thermonuclear power has been delayed for several years. The withholding of the latest planes and non-atomic weapons has seriously restricted China's offensive power, while failure to send replacement parts means a dwindling Chinese air force. At the same time the Soviet Union is beginning to supply India with its latest "Migs," if in lesser numbers.

Russian *matériel,* of course, played a key role in enabling the Chinese to fight so effectively against UN (largely American) troops in the Korean war. It has also come into play in Laos and Vietnam. That is one reason for uncertainty as to Russia's reaction to any showdown between China and the United States. To offset Chinese manpower and native diffidence there would be a temptation to resort to the "tactical" atomic weapons of the nearby Seventh Fleet (which are more destructive than those used at Hiroshima).

For America to embark on such a course would play into Chinese hands. Here, for a second time, would the great "colonial-imperialist" power be utilizing the most destructive of weapons, and that against native non-Caucasians. Here would be sown the seeds of a final racial cataclysm that defies the limits of human imagination.

That is one move clearly to be avoided in the immediate Far East crisis. Can anything positive be done without dropping our guard so that when

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China becomes a developed industrial and military power in the 1970's it will no longer be spoiling to tear the world asunder? The changed attitude of the Soviet Union supplies a clue. Marked material progress could similarly provide the new Chinese leaders with a stake in peace. To begin with, America's allies could resume business relations or expand their present Chinese trade. We, too, could gradually resume trade in non-strategic goods. One object would be greater prosperity for the admirable Chinese people, another the development of as many human contacts as possible. In the long run our isolation of the Chinese will produce only calamitous results.

Foreign Aid Cuts

IT IS HARDLY necessary to point out that, down through the years since World War II, the American foreign aid program has rarely aroused much popular enthusiasm. At best, it has been accepted by the public with a sense of resignation if not apathy. At worst, it has met direct opposition. That it has survived at all is a tribute to the existence of a sufficient number of wise politicians, both Democratic and Republican, who have been convinced of its necessity and value (roughly in that order). The foreign aid question has also been an instance over the years of a constructive bipartisanship. Though neither party could expect to gain much political mileage from their support of such aid, that support was nonetheless given.

There are many things disturbing about the House treatment of the Administration's Aid bill, but perhaps the worst was the obvious collapse of bipartisanship. From the start of the House debates it was obvious that the bill would be in for difficult times. If nothing else, the Clay Committee report of last March gave foreign aid critics something more solid than usual to wield against the bill. In that report, almost as a political miracle, a hand-picked Presidential committee echoed and detailed some of the traditional charges against American foreign aid: that it was spread too thin, was often ineptly managed and produced results far short of expectations. Almost lost amidst the chortles of many Republicans and a sizeable group of Southern Democrats was the Committee's view that a foreign aid program is "essential to the security of the country."

It now seems clear that the Administration has not been able to surmount that first blow. In anticipation of House opposition springing from the Clay report, the President initially cut his request from $4.9 to $4.5 billion. But that did not stem the tide of opposition. The House Foreign Affairs Committee lopped off another $400 million and then, by a vote of 224 to 186, the full House itself passed a bill cutting still another $585 million. Even if the Senate restores some of this money, the bill will have taken a major beating. In particular, the House vote cut out $150 million of the $600 million the Administration had requested for the Alliance for Progress, a move almost certain to have harmful consequences on a program just barely underway in the first place.

Almost certainly the President's request would have been cut in some way. But the real surprise was the solidity of the Republican opposition, directed and disciplined in a way which put to shame the President's talents for political maneuvering. Just why almost twenty years of bipartisanship in this area was broken is not clear. The rising tide of popular opposition to foreign aid likely has something to do with it. So too, worries about the rising Federal deficit and the unfavorable balance of payments situation doubtlessly played a part as well. Nor can the persistent reports of an increasing amount of personal animosity in Congress toward Mr. Kennedy be discounted.

The harsh reality, then, is that the Administration is having the ground cut out from under it on foreign aid—and there is little reason to hope that next year will show improvement. But a no less harsh reality is that foreign aid continues to be an essential part of American foreign policy. If the needs of foreign nations (and the nations in need themselves) are different now from five or ten years ago, they are still as pressing as ever. As a fact, the House cuts are distressing enough. As a possible portent, they are appalling.

Vietnam Repression

THE VERY virtues that made Diem such an effective anti-Communist leader—steadfastness and stubbornness—now seem to be working inevitably toward his downfall. From the first Buddhist outbreaks, he has missed one opportunity after another to conciliate the opposition, or failing that, to blunt its thrust. By the time he was grudgingly ready to conciliate—by offering an international investigation of the May 8 shootings—the Buddhist leadership had upped the ante with further demands, and American public opinion was captured and held by what the London *Economist* calls "the cynical public-relations activities of sharp young monks."

In Western terms Diem's rigidity is inexplicable. Had he immediately broadcast his regret over the Hué shootings, along with a promise that there

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would be no repetition, the ground would have been cut from under the opposition. Even later in the game, if he had gathered about him a group of prestigious Buddhists loyal to his government, and made them his spokesmen in the crisis, the world would not have been so quick to see an essentially political struggle as a religious one. For whether the Buddhist protest was religious in its origins or was politically motivated from the first, the major news media in this country are now agreed that the battle is political.

Even today, after the particularly brutal repressions that preceded the arrival of Ambassador Lodge, it is instructive to consider whether the Buddhist revolt is, or ever was, an essentially religious protest. It is true that as long ago as last March the French Catholic magazine *Informations Catholiques Internationales* warned against any attempt to establish Catholicism in Vietnam. And there is, reporters agree, a disproportionately high number of Catholics in the Diem government, plus charges of favoritism toward Catholic groups. None of this is to be defended. Nevertheless, as the reports from Vietnam accumulated, charges of persecution of Buddhists became more and more elusive. Before Diem —or his brother—touched off the attack on the pagodas, it was not clear whether the charges were justified or just what the Buddhist leadership wanted. Marguerite Higgins' articles in the *Herald Tribune*, arguing that the Buddhist cause was hollow and opportunistic from the first, illustrate how uncertain our knowledge of Vietnam really is.

If this has not really been a religious protest, but rather a cynical attempt to use Buddhism to bring down the Diem regime, then the American public has been viewing the turmoil from a curious angle. American indignation seems largely based on a sensitivity toward religious rights, and to a lesser extent on our belief in Church-State separation, both of which appear to have doubtful application in present-day Vietnam.

The Diem raid on the pagodas, however, has radically altered the situation. The brutality of the action, the violation of religious grounds, plus the breach of faith with the American government, have probably tipped the scales decisively against the regime. World public opinion, and perhaps Vietnamese opinion, is now solidly against Diem, and once again the United States, despite its own best efforts, has found itself backing a repressive regime in the name of anti-Communism. Here it seems that the attack on the pagodas was either an act of desperation or a drastic miscalculation of American reaction. It is difficult not to feel some sympathy for Diem, who fought both French colonialists and Communists with equal strength and conviction. But once again it is becoming clear that anti-Communism is not enough. It is possible that Diem could still conciliate both the American government and the Buddhist opposition. But it is highly unlikely. Partly through Diem's efforts, the Buddhist movement has gained the kind of momentum that will grow until Diem falls. The question now is not so much "If not Diem, who?" but rather, "Instead of Diem, who?" The matter is complicated by the failure of the Buddhist movement to produce a leader of Diem's stature. But that is another problem. The issue of the moment is how to ease Diem out.

The next issue of The Commonweal will be dated Sept. 20. This marks the end of the alternate-week summer publishing schedule and the resumption of normal weekly publication.

HERE AND THERE

God and the Professors

IT IS ALMOST a quarter of a century since Mortimer J. Adler, then a young professor at the University of Chicago, caused an academic uproar with an address called "God and the Professors." Mr. Adler, who was then engrossed in an intellectual love affair with Thomas Aquinas, accused his professional confreres of dealing arrogantly, frivolously, and irresponsibly with the religious question. Positivism, even more than it is now, was the reigning philosophy of the universities at the time. Not surprisingly, the Thomistic tenor of the charge, if nothing else, was deemed unforgivable by many who heard Professor Adler or later read his lecture.

Mortimer Adler, despite his sympathy for the philosophy of Saint Thomas, was not a Catholic when the controversial talk was given. Nor has he become a Catholic in the meantime, and his Thomistic ardor has cooled considerably. Yet I believe he would still defend the central thesis of "God and the Professors."

Whether he would or not, I would.

For some time now, I have been meeting with, listening to, and sympathetically trying to understand a later generation of professors or the same professors grown older. There is of course an essential difference between Adler and me, aside from the obvious disparity between our native endowments and academic distinctions. I am

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accepted as a Catholic, a "committed man," to use the fashionable phrase. My preoccupation with the Religious Question is therefore forgivable, even if it is not wholly understandable. A "man of reason" who specifically denies that he has the gift of faith, as Mortimer Adler used to do, is not expected to take the "religious hypothesis" as seriously as Mr. Adler did. When I introduce the concept of God in a serious discussion, the lapse can be charged to a breach of taste attributable to the mysterious "commitment." As such, it is tolerantly borne. But one who, like Mr. Adler, makes no claim to faith cannot expect the same tolerance.

Now, lest there be any misunderstanding, let me say that the "God of the Philosophers," the First Cause, Pure Act and all the other designations of the scholastic manuals, is, to me as to all believers, a very inadequate concept of the Deity. Our religious life depends ultimately not on reason but on Revelation. We pray, not to the Prime Mover, but to a Father who is in Heaven. This, however, does not mean that our "commitment" is either irrational or hopelessly cut off from the normal processes of intellection. We know where reason ends and faith begins; even the famous "leap of faith" has a rational starting point.

Because we have accepted a supernatural revelation, or what we take to be a supernatural revelation, does not mean that we are thereby denying that at a certain level the religious concern can be a product of reason. To be "committed," in other words, is neither to foreswear reason nor turn one's back on intelligence. Natural religion, to be sure, is not Christianity—but it is religion. Or, at the least, the existence of God and all that follows from it is a respectable intellectual hypothesis.

To have one's acceptance of such a position attributed, as it frequently is, to mindless conformity, some primitive fear, or sheer sociological conditioning, is most galling. For the man who accepts natural religion, even if he has not made the leap of faith, to know that he is being patronized, is thoroughly frustrating, particularly when he stands ready to defend the position on reasonable grounds. For the man of faith to recognize that his "commitment" is regarded as a kind of sweet sickness that seeps through all his attempts at reason is humiliating. But, even today, these are common enough experiences. They can have devilish effect on the young college student, tempted always to conformity, as well as on the older person anxious for intellectual acceptance.

Mr. Adler's central point, then, remains powerful. We have all had experiences with the raised-eyebrow censure of religious concern and we don't have to dig back a quarter of a century to recall them. The cheap victory over natural theology that is gained not by syllogism but by wisecrack is still being won daily in a thousand classrooms and lecture halls.

"Natural theology"—there is something old-fashioned in the sound of the phrase. We have become so used to the all-or-nothing approach to religion that for many, even among the devout, the term itself has become almost an embarrassment. Such tremendous emphasis has been put on the mystical side of religion—such insistence on "commitment," "engagement" and the "leap of faith"—that the more mundane, rational arguments for the existence of God and the creatureliness of man are rarely even heard any more. There is a good side to this development of course; it has invigorated theology. But the bad side is that too many who find it impossible to make the "leap" feel that they are thereby relieved of all further responsibility for taking religion seriously as a proper object of intellectual enquiry.

One should not exalt dogmatic theology by belittling natural theology this way, though it often happens. The faithful, full of a sense of their "commitment," tend to downgrade natural religion. In their turn, the un-religious, rejecting the claim of "commitment," airily dismiss the case for natural theology as unworthy of investigation. The choice, then, is seen simply as a full acceptance of this or that dogmatic theology or no religion at all. This may well be the actual choice facing individuals. Perhaps the claims of grace are such that each man is one day required in conscience to make such a choice. Only if we could read the human heart would we know for sure whether this is true. But in the absence of such omniscience, we have no right to ask petulantly why so-and-so who seems convinced that there is a God doesn't go "the whole way."

Yet, whether or not this is the choice facing individuals, it is not the choice facing society. Even a pluralistic society cannot properly ignore the claim of natural theology. Purely on its intellectual merits, the "religious hypothesis" remains worthy of serious investigation. It is no concern of the educator in the secular school whether or not the investigation leads to "commitment," any more than it is his concern whether the investigation of Freudianism or capitalism or Marxism leads to another kind of commitment. To ask him either to encourage or discourage such commitment would be to turn him into a propagandist, not a teacher.

The disdain for natural theology found among some religiously committed persons has resulted in society's being faced with too drastic an either/or in the treatment of religion in public life. It has encouraged intellectuals without faith to be more cavalier than they should be with the "God hypothesis." It has sucked the juridical meaning out of Justice Douglas' famous dictum, "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being." In that formula, properly understood, there was a constitutional guide for action. When it is understood to mean that we are a nation of committed Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, it is, first of all, not entirely accurate, and, secondly, it becomes a source of the Court's confusion on the role of religion in public life rather than a help. JOHN COGLEY

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The New Pluralism: From Nostalgia to Reality

DANIEL CALLAHAN

AS WE ALL know, the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 was taken as decisive evidence that the Catholic minority had "come of age" in America. It was also taken as proof that the fearful myth of "Catholic power" in Paul Blanshard's sense had been exploded, the purported "pluralism" of our society vindicated, and the way opened for a creative confrontation with the "Protestant-Catholic-Jew" image of American society which, according to Will Herberg, has come to supplant the old ethnic composition of our people. In brief, America seemed well on its way to becoming the promised land of pluralism in fact as well as theory.

There was surely something attractive in this reading of Mr. Kennedy's election; it had its elements of truth. It has also become hopelessly outdated. The real confrontation with pluralism is only now beginning. At most, Mr. Kennedy's election proved that a Catholic could be elected to the Presidency—if he went to Harvard, was a Democrat, had a rich father, a beautiful wife, a finely tuned political machine and some plain good luck. I say this not by way of dismissing the changes which the election implied, but only to recall Catholic romanticists to their senses.

It was not Mr. Kennedy's good fortune which made pluralism a fact. That honor must go to the recent Supreme Court prayer and Bible-reading decisions. By and large, they were unpopular—it is difficult to imagine Congress or any state legislature voting for such decrees. Many people, in fact, would now like to see a constitutional amendment which would reflect popular feeling and reinstate "our religious heritage." In the sense that the decisions were unpopular, it can be said that they were not genuinely pluralistic. To judge from the laments, they violated the sensibilities of the "majority." This is an intelligible, if not fully persuasive argument.

The real curiosity that emerges from the decisions lies in the variety of responses which they elicited. Jews on the whole welcomed them—no surprise there. Protestants reacted with mixed feelings—that was a little surprising; one might have expected more opposition. But that Catholics should, with near unanimity on the first decision and vigorous if less heated objections on the second, be the most prominent dissenters is remarkable. Who would have supposed beforehand that Catholics would have become indignant when prayers were taken out of the already "Godless public schools"? True, that is a bad joke and one which does violence to the good intentions and religious zeal of the Catholic critics. Put with more delicacy, who would have supposed that Catholics would take the lead in defending an American "religious heritage" the roots of which are Protestant and deist and which, until very recently, was hardly more than a quasi-establishment of Protestantism?

THERE ARE many possible answers to these questions. One I would like to propose is this: Catholics have willingly and even vociferously defended the American separation of Church and State because they have been able to enjoy the next best thing, a close bond between religion (writ large) and American culture. The short of the matter is that America has been a religious, indeed, a quasi-sacral society; hence, in sacrificing any desire for a union of Church and State, only the icing of the religio-pluralistic cake has been omitted. What need is there for a formal partnership of cleric and legislator when the forces of tradition, custom and social conformity guarantee that religion will remain a dominant force in society?

To say this is not to cast any doubt, even indirectly, on the American Catholic dedication to the separation of Church and State. It is rather to assert that the recent Court decisions have shown that there still remain in the bones of the Catholic strong traces of his ancestral dependence upon a sacral society to shore up, promote and honor religious values. One might even go so far as to suggest that there has been an unacknowledged proviso in Catholic enthusiasm for the separation of Church and State: such a separation is good so long as it does not jeopardize a favored place for religious values in our cultural, political and juridical life. Put another way, Church and State may be separate as long as this does not disturb the ancient premise which was once thought to entail their close union: that the State has an obligation to cooperate with, and give public support and comfort to religion. The Catholic reaction against the

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decisions could thus be explained as an awareness that now the premise itself is being called into question.

The Supreme Court decisions have cast starkly before Catholics the fact that America is ceasing to be a religio-sacral society with the Christian religion riding in the seat of power. Yet whatever one may think of the decisions, they were inevitable. In the largest sense they confirmed what by now ought to be obvious, that there exists in this country a large Jewish-secular minority (supported by many Protestants) who are not committed to the American religious heritage in the form in which it developed over the course of American history. Why should they be so committed, especially when experience has taught them that this tradition imposes many burdens on their conscience? Do they not have the right, as much as the Christian, to make their values count in our society? Why should they be forced to conform to majority values (or accept concessions from that majority), as if, somehow, American values were fixed once and for all before their arrival and need not now be adapted to the changes which their presence would suggest? As it happened, it took the Supreme Court to make their voices count; but sooner or later the legislative process would have achieved the same effect.

HOW HARD it seems for Catholics to accept this change. Why? I have already suggested one reason: that Catholics are far less willing to relinquish the old idea of a sacral society than even they themselves recognize. Despite all the disputes with Protestants over the years, Catholics have profited from the fact that religion and Christianity have been favored and abetted. There is still another and more disturbing reason. In spite of the incessant discussion among Catholics over the last two decades about "Catholicism and pluralism," it is now apparent that it touched only one part of the problem: the gaining of a place for Catholics comparable to their number and the overcoming of those disabilities imposed upon them by the dominant (Protestant) majority. Much of this discussion was defensive in its thrust: the answering of attacks, the allaying of suspicions and, internally, the theological struggle to convince other Catholics (in Rome and at home) that the American system was one favorable to Catholicism. It is that discussion which Mr. Kennedy's election served in great part to halt.

But it did little to prepare the ground for the new shape of American pluralism, a pluralism which must now take account of a new minority, one whose disabilities in the past were as great if not greater than any borne by Catholics. The question today is not: Is Catholicism compatible with American democratic pluralism set within a Christian context (the old situation)? Instead, Is Catholicism compatible with the new pluralism, set now within a context in which, step by step, religion is losing its traditional privileges, in which it has steadily to give way to the pressures and demands of those opposed to any form (even cultural) of a sacral society? In the past, America had a "neutral" state—favorable to religion. We now have a state which is becoming truly neutral—favorable neither to belief nor unbelief. That so many Catholics have desperately begun claiming that the emergent "neutrality" actually favors unbelief is, I fear, indicative of dependence upon the old sacralism.

It is not possible to say the same thing about the Jewish community or of an important segment of Protestant thought. The reasons for the different responses to the changing pluralism are well brought out in a valuable book by Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, Martin Marty and Monsignor Joseph Moody, *The Outbursts that Await Us* (Macmillan, $4.50), subtitled "Three Essays on Religion and Culture in America."

Rabbi Hertzberg expresses very directly the underlying reason why most Jews support the prayer decisions. "In the hard school of suffering Jews have learned to feel almost instinctively that their freedom is safest—indeed that they can even achieve freedom—only in societies in which the church is blunted in its dominance of public life." In addition, "the rise of the modern secular state was the *sine qua non* to the political emancipation of the Jews." Though all Jews would not accept Rabbi Hertzberg's analysis, the majority probably would. Thus, it is easy to see why the Court decisions were greeted as a special kind of emancipation for the Jews: no longer would they have to accept a whole range of religious practices in the public schools which reminded them of the Christian hegemony in American life. Yet as Rabbi Hertzberg also adds (somewhat ambiguously), "The First Amendment is not the real dogma of the American Jew. His deepest and most messianic need is not a completely secular state; *it is a truly equal status in American culture.*" The fact—and a sad one it is—that so many Catholics seem totally unable to comprehend how a believing Jew could actually want religion removed from public life bespeaks both a misunderstanding of the Jews and an almost constitutional inability to conceive of a society of religious men who do not want some kind of favor from the State.

THIS LATTER viewpoint, however, is one which a new generation of Protestant thinkers finds comprehensible. In his essay, Martin Marty graphically sketches a new direction for American Protestantism. "If there is," he writes, "a potential in secularity and validity to pluralism and if the Christian has nothing to fear in exposing his truth to other truths, then his truth calls him to that exposure." The critical phrase here is "a potential in secularity and validity to pluralism." Dr. Marty is willing to affirm what so many Christians seem unwilling to accept: that secularity could be a positive good—not only for the State, but for society as well.

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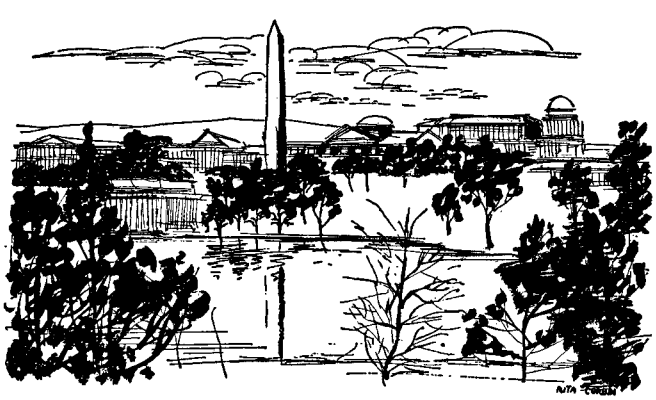
"Somehow one senses," he says, "long after the official end of the age of Constantine, a real fear among Christians including Protestants that the faith cannot persist without the shelter of an official culture, without the pretext of quasi-legal props." "More and more," he writes in another place, "the churches seem to want the pluralist society to do what they fail to do individually and ecclesiastically. They want it to be productive of values, want it to be the teacher."

All of this is apt to be misunderstood. Dr. Marty is not calling on Protestants for a harmless, inoffensive Christianity which refuses to make its voice heard in the market place. On the contrary, he asks only for a "post-imperial view of Protestantism. . . That is, a self-critical Protestantism which does not rely on a Protestant culture, [one which] must be more disciplined, more informed, more sacrificial and thus—in Christian terms—more productive than the self-enhancing form which wants laws and culture and ethos to do its work for it." But it is not Protestantism alone, I would add, which harbors these attitudes. If Catholicism has never had an "imperial" era in America, it has often sought to have "laws and culture and ethos do its work for it." Catholics as well as Protestants still show the heritage of the Constantinian-Justinian settlements. Those settlements, Dr. Marty argues, "built into the Christian *psyche* that attitude toward the state which is still reflected in every request for exemptions and favors for religion."

There is, happily, little suggestion of such an attitude in Monsignor Moody's essay. He wisely points out that American pluralism was a product of circumstances and "practical necessity was its dynamic." His suggestion that "religion's most decisive social contribution is its effort to limit man's aggressiveness through love of God and neighbor," strikes me as a particularly valuable insight. More concretely, Monsignor Moody argues that "What religion can do is to strengthen belief in the democratic propositions by emphasizing their moral foundations," or, put another way, "to deepen the American political faith in democracy."

My uneasiness with Monsignor Moody's essay arises only when he observes that "American Catholics were the pioneers in adjusting to a pluralist society." In one obvious sense this is true. Catholics were for many decades the largest and most important minority group in a Protestant society. They fought the first battles and, by sheer force of number, had much to do with opening up our society to the influence of non-Protestants. But it is important not to forget that the pluralist society in question was a "Christian" society, and that the pioneering work involved the co-existence of Christians, not of believer and unbeliever. As matters stand today, Catholics are by no means acting like "pioneers" in facing the new shape of American pluralism. Instead, they are prone to be aligned with those Protestants, especially in the fundamentalist camp, who are disturbed that the good old days of religion are being cast aside in favor of what they choose to call "secularism." The pioneers have joined the rearguard.



BUT THIS objection is only a quibble, and a point worth mentioning because it serves to call attention to a comment by Monsignor Moody which I would hope could be taken with full seriousness by Catholics. "There is even a possibility," Monsignor Moody writes, "that American Catholics may have to learn, as have the Jews in so many areas, how to live in a society which does not reflect their values. This would be a new experience for them in America, for even in their earlier experience here the Protestant-dominated culture had values they could understand."

The question is, when should we begin to learn? Monsignor Moody does not believe that the problem is a pressing one: "I do not feel that Catholics will face this problem in the foreseeable future as religious feeling is still deeply imbedded in the people; were they to have to, I suspect that they would do it with the flexibility that their history in America suggests." Well, I am not at all confident that Catholics will respond with "flexibility." The reaction to the Court decisions was marked by rigidity, the hurling of charges, the retailing of the worst possible clichés. Doubtless there has been flexibility in the past; but signs of paralysis are everywhere in evidence.

Yet it is unlikely that the new pluralism will be given sufficient attention until Catholics begin thinking about the meaning of a "secular" society. This remark may seem surprising, for it can easily be pointed out that Catholic political thinkers and theologians have developed numerous delicate distinctions and rationales for full Catholic participation in pluralistic societies. The concept of the "state," for instance, is customarily distinguished from that of "society"; thus many thinkers can argue that it is improper to identify the duties of the state toward religion with those of society. Or again, it is common (following St. Thomas) to distinguish between good laws and good morality; hence the Catholic moralist will readily admit that not every immoral

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act should be prohibited by civil law. Such distinctions are useful. They have been the cornerstones upon which Catholics have based their claim to be full-hearted, democratic, pluralistic Americans.

Nonetheless, their permanent utility may well be doubted, and this precisely because the *de facto* context in which these distinctions have been employed has been in a society steeped in Christian values. Even now it seems apparent that Catholic thought is ill-equipped to contribute any special creativity to a post-prayer-decision America—an America in which agnosticism has as much right to the full privileges of the state as does religion. A clue to this malaise lies in a certain either-or type of thinking common among Catholic thinkers: either the Courts must allow prayer in the public schools or the result will favor secularism; either religion must be aided in the public schools or a "religion of secularism" will be established; either our society must proclaim publicly its allegiance to God or it will become a Godless society; either religion must receive public recognition and privilege or we will have an agnostic, hedonistic citizenry. There is no sound reason to make such assumptions, to create such stark alternatives. They all stem from a poverty of imagination which, in effect, assumes that if religion is excluded from public support and special deference the result must inevitably favor the forces of anti-religion.

THERE ARE MANY possible explanations to account for a mentality which creates such black and white antitheses. The historical fact that many European attempts to strip religion of its privileges and protections were motivated by a rejection of religion itself cannot easily be forgotten. Nor is it difficult to find historical examples to show that a prime tactic of those opposed to religious values is to urge that religion be relegated to the private, personal and subjective recesses of men's hearts, to remove it from the public order. But there is little evidence to suggest that anything of the kind is now taking place in America. On the contrary, a good case can be made that religious values now exercise, in some areas of our public life, a far greater influence than at any time in the past. (Whatever their failures in the past, the churches in America are now taking the lead, for instance, in the struggle against racial discrimination.) Those who have attacked, or litigated against, governmental support of religion have done so on the grounds that their rights were being infringed—not on the grounds that religious values are false or harmful values. Yet, somehow, Catholics find it hard to recognize this distinction.

The main reason, I would suggest, why many Catholics are prone to create antitheses is that they have never fully confronted the idea of a neutral state or of a secular society. Now that such a reality is beginning to emerge they are finding that the elaborate rationales of the past no longer work very efficiently—thus they fall back on what can only be called the clichés of nineteenth-century Catholicism: a secular state is necessarily a "secularistic" state, a neutral state is necessarily one inimical to religion, and so forth. The worst cliché of all is that if religion does not have a privileged place in society, then it must necessarily become only a private affair, with no force in the public arena.

THE TASK which now lies before Catholics is to rid their mind of such vestiges of the past. As an Anglican writer, D. L. Munby argues in *The Idea of a Secular Society* (Oxford, $3), "It is not clear what would be positively lost, even in a society where a majority were Christian, if the State machinery scrupulously refused to concern itself with this fact." At first glance this might seem too rash a statement. Would not the children suffer if they never heard God mentioned or acknowledged in the public schools? Would not the citizens suffer if the lordship of God was not affirmed by the state? Would not the churches suffer if their special importance as moral and religious educators was not legislatively recognized? Would not the morals of citizens suffer if the state did not affirm the existence of an eternal, absolute code of conduct? All these things might indeed happen, but why should they? The only firm reason to suppose such a course of events is that religion is of its nature incapable of existing apart from state support and deference. Since no one is likely to accept such an idea (and history would quickly confute anyone who did), we are left with little more than speculation tinged with free-floating fear. In fact, in such a society as ours the churches and religion continue to have many important ways of educating the people and influencing public opinion on moral and religious matters, only one of which (and least important) is government support and special homage.

Equally important, there is much to be said for a genuinely secular (as opposed to secularistic) society, and much to support a Christian scrupulosity in asking nothing more from the state than freedom. The central question, then, is, how can we devise a society which is secular without being secularistic, a neutral state which does not favor unbelief, and a free society which does not work to the disadvantage of either religion or non-religion? Here, in essence, we have the great conundrum posed by the newly emergent American pluralism. It is a perplexity which will not be solved by pressing for a return to the good old days when, supposedly, America's "religious heritage" was accepted by all. And most surely it will not be solved as long as so many Christians assume that any limitation on the public homage to religion once offered by the American state amounts to the establishment of secularism.

There will be no painless or simple solution. The needs of the new pluralistic situation will require re-

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straint from every one of the groupings of men who make up our society—from believers and unbelievers, Jews, Protestants and Catholics. As for the churches, and especially for Catholics, the pressing need is to consider anew what it is which they have to give to men and society; and what, as a minimal requirement, they actually need to maintain their freedom and dignity. For my part, I am extremely doubtful that religion needs the kind of public support and deference it has received in the past. Christianity has, one would assume, sufficient inner resources to survive and flourish on its own—it does not need state props, special privilege and cultural honors. Moreover, one of the most important insights achieved by the contemporary Church is the centrality of human freedom. If it did not do so in the past, the privilege granted to religion in America (especially Christianity) now works as a limitation on the freedom of a large number of people. The extent to which the Church attempts to enlarge the freedom of those people will be the real measure of its dedication to the idea of human liberty. It costs comparatively little to argue for one's own freedom; it may cost much to argue for the freedom of another. But this latter is the meaningful test.

Hobbling the Constitution

WALTER DEAN BURNHAM

THIS YEAR's sudden intensification of the struggle over civil rights has shocked a good many thinking citizens into the well-founded suspicion that this nation has once again come face to face with a major domestic crisis. It is perhaps to be regretted, however, that civil rights have come so thoroughly to dominate the headlines during the past few months, for we may be misled into believing that it is the only major issue before the house. Actually, it is but one aspect of the unfolding crisis, however important it may be in itself. At root, the crisis of the regime which we now face is bound up with an increasingly pervasive struggle between two Americas. To be sure, neither the America of the large, complex and sophisticated metropolitan centers nor the America of the farm, the small town and the Black Belt is a monolithic bloc. Even so, their antagonism is more sharply defined now than it has been at any time since the Populist-Bryanite insurrection of the 1890's, and it seems nearly certain to intensify further as the crisis deepens.

One of its most fascinating symptoms at the present moment is the open warfare which has broken out between sophisticated, mostly Northeastern conservatives and the Goldwater-oriented fundamentalist Right within the Republican Party. Another, with which we are directly concerned here, has been the concerted move made this year by states' rights ideologues of both parties to amend the federal Constitution in such a way as to return us about half way to the state of affairs prevailing under the Articles of Confederation.

Deprivation, whether actual or threatened, is one of the most active generators of political action. Those who perceive themselves as threatened with the loss of vested interests, whether economic, socio-cultural or both, will also be apt to identify certain hostile "out-groups," races, religions, or occupational strata, as responsible for their plight. These disadvantaged groups are likely to be joined by the ambitious—such as the silver-mine owners of the 1890's or the Texas oil millionaires of today—who perceive these same out-groups as hostile social forces standing in the way of the full and secure realization of their ambitions. Those who want restoration of a supposedly happy *status quo ante*, working together with those who don't want "them" to "take it away," develop an ideology which justifies their ways to God and man. Armed with the classical Jeffersonian-agrarian hostility to central governments and cities, with a ruralist-propertied definition of "liberty," the Old America enters the political arena to combat the New and to restore the national temple to its ancient truths: states' rights and laissez-faire. The size of the conservative-coalition bloc in Congress and the detailed results of the 1960 election alike suggest that the balance between the two Americas is numerically very nearly even. The structure of our representative system and the feeble organization of our political parties have alike helped vitally to provide an enormous defensive advantage for most of the political interests which the Older America has sought to defend. Even so, a major segment of Older-American opinion is not content with this. It is recognized that in order to achieve a reactionary utopia more sweeping measures are needed. A decisive political victory is to be won by changing the rules of the game—by amending the Constitution.

AS DE TOCQUEVILLE pointed out more than a century ago, there is scarcely a substantial political ques-

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tion in America which does not sooner or later become a judicial—i.e., a legalist—question. Similarly, times of severe strains within the polity have always been historically associated with sharp increases in the intensity of efforts to change its constitutional regime. Since World War II these efforts have been conspicuously identified with political causes of the American Right, and have emerged in three main waves. The first, marked by the success of the 22nd Amendment and the near-success of the Bricker Amendment, was largely aimed at a liberalized Presidency; procedurally, it was confined to the usual method of securing congressional approval prior to submission of the proposed amendments to the states. The second wave, reaching its apogee from 1957 to 1959, centered on "curbing" a liberalized Supreme Court by securing withdrawal of its appellate jurisdiction by Congress in certain classes of cases—an end which could be reached without resort to the formal amendment procedure. Both assaults on the two branches of the national government to which the underprivileged minorities of the Newer America had achieved some access resulted, it is important to note, in partial success for the assailants in some areas and very narrow margins of defeat for them in others.

It is not difficult to discern the thrust of these proposed changes. They were designed to break up the insistent drift toward nationalization and democratization in our political life; to make far more difficult any appeal by disfavored minorities from the local power structures to the national power structure; to return us by a *coup de main* to the lost arcadia of 1896-1932, when democracy was virtually put out of commission for a long season to accommodate the needs of elites in an industrializing society. They are major and sophisticated efforts by the Right to win the game by changing the rules in such a way as drastically to narrow the scope of political conflict: to secure "liberty" of a certain kind, and for certain people, at the expense of democracy.

These rightist drives have now reached their logical conclusion. Last December a majority of the members of the Council of State Governments proposed three amendments to the Constitution; the campaign for their adoption got underway immediately. One of these amendments simply seeks the reversal of *Baker v. Carr* by prohibiting any federal court to exercise jurisdiction in any case "relating to apportionment of representation in a state legislature." The second would establish a fifty-man "Court of the Union," composed of the chief justices of each of the states and having the power to review and reverse all Supreme Court decisions "relating to the rights reserved to the states or the people." The third amendment is intended to change the constitutional amending process itself by permitting two-thirds of the states to propose amendments directly, without resort to Congress or a national convention.

Were these amendments adopted, the consequences for our polity would be immense. The first would ensure that rurally-dominated rotten-boroughism at the state level could be done away with, if at all, only by revolution. The second proposal, calling for the establishment of a Court of the Union, can only be called grotesque. Overturning *Cohens v. Virginia* (1821) and the verdict of Appomattox, it would finally demonstrate that after all the Founders had *not* created a nation. In 1913 Justice Holmes remarked:

"I do not think the United States would come to an end if we lost our power to declare an Act of Congress void. I do think the Union would be imperilled if we could not make that declaration as to the laws of the several States. For one in my place sees how often a local policy prevails with those who are not trained to national views and how often action is taken that embodies what the Commerce Clause was meant to end."

NOW THAT imperiling of the Union—that disruption of the coherence of federal-state relations—is proposed by those who call themselves conservatives. The quality of such so-called conservatism can best be appraised by reflecting on the nature of proposals such as this. Nor is the third amendment, removing the last vestige of participation in the amending process by those trained to national views, any less sweepingly radical in its localist fervor. It is hard not to agree with Charles Black of Yale Law School when he writes of these amendments that "they aim . . . at the subversion of that balance in federal-state relations which has enabled us to escape the evils of despotism and totalitarianism.

Scarcely less remarkable than the content of these proposals is the way in which their supporters are going about seeking their adoption. For the first time in the history of the country a concerted effort is being made to use that part of Article V which permits two-thirds of the state legislatures to require Congress to call a convention for the purpose of considering specific amendments. The few attempts along this line in the past have invariably foundered because the texts of the proposed amendments were not uniform. This time a committee of the National Legislative Conference—an arm of the Council of State Governments—is coordinating the drive for uniform amendments with especially energetic support from the Florida legislature. This drive is under the leadership of W. Stuart Helm (R.), Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, who hails from a typical declining rural backwater—Kitanning (population in 1960: 6,793; in 1950: 7,731). At last count, four states have approved the proposal to set up a Court of the Union, nine have accepted the amendment which would leave the proposal of amendments entirely in the hands of the states, and twelve have endorsed the apportionment amendment. As might be expected, success has been greatest in the

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South and West. At least one of the three proposals has been approved by the legislatures of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska (killed by gubernatorial veto), Nevada, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. In addition at least one house of the legislature has approved at least one of them in Colorado, Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi, New Jersey (later rescinded), New Mexico, Oregon, South Carolina and Wisconsin.

The tactics which the proponents of these amendments have been using fall neatly into place with other aspects of the Rightist politics of scope-narrowing, of balkanizing political conflict so as to ensure that local power elites may continue their rule undisturbed by nationalizing political influences. Remembering how the 22nd Amendment was ratified virtually without debate, they have consistently sought to secure adoption by state legislatures with the least possible publicity. They correctly realized that if these amendments were publicly debated, the defensive advantage inherent in our political system would work against them: the opposition from Newer-America opinion leaders and publics would be so intense that they would have no chance of adoption by the necessary two-thirds majority.

FOR A TIME their tactics were outstandingly successful. By April of this year almost all legislative action mentioned above had occurred, without debate or even public knowledge of what was afoot. Then the political conflict was drastically expanded in scope and the original success rapidly turned into stalemate as leaders and new groups belatedly entered it. Governor Morrison (D.) of Nebraska vetoed the legislature's package bill on the excellent grounds that it was subversive of the Constitution. Professor Black's letter, originally written in January, began to receive wider currency along with others like it from the faculty of the great law schools. During April and May sharp warnings against changing the Constitution "unwittingly" were voiced by the Chief Justice, the Attorney General, the Solicitor-General, and finally by the President himself. On May 22 the Board of Governors of the American Bar Association, after a good deal of prodding, came out in opposition to the amendments dealing with the Court of the Union and the proposed change in amending procedure, but put off comment on the proposal to reverse *Baker v. Carr* until the Bar's August convention.

The backers of these amendments suffered the disadvantages of publicity almost at once. In New Jersey, the state Senate had unanimously adopted the apportionment and amendment proposals, quite without serious discussion or debate. Then Governor Hughes (D.) and Senator Case (R.) pointedly denounced them at their respective party conventions. The Senate—which, of course, covered itself with glory as a responsible and deliberative legislative body!—then promptly rescinded its action, also without a dissenting vote.

Ohio was also a major battleground, since that state is highly industrialized but politically quite conservative. If victory were secured here, a bandwagon movement might very well develop. Chances were seemingly good. The apportionment amendment—far the most popular of the three—was before a Senate committee controlled 7 to 2 by Republicans, and the committee chairman favored it. Then a Cleveland radio station carried a broadcast about the peculiar campaign tactics of the amendment's supporters, and such major newspapers as the Toledo *Blade* began publishing articles and editorials condemning it. Although the committee, reversing a tentative decision to kill the proposal, finally reported it out, it is now generally believed that Ohio is not likely to join the ranks of the proposing states.

There the story ends for the moment. The press of more immediate concerns has driven the matter from the daily headlines. But the campaign is not dead by any means. A constitutional amendment, unlike a bill before Congress, does not die at the end of any legislative session. There's always next year, and the list of states approving can be expected to have cumulative additions. The proponents of these three amendments, quite unwittingly paying a deep tribute to the common sense and intelligence of the American people, have responded to requests for public debates on the merits by proceeding doggedly with their silent campaign.

The present crisis of the regime, of which this movement is a symptom, is as genuine as it is massive. The struggle for democracy is still going on in the United States; so is the parallel struggle to maintain this country's relevance to the twentieth century. It is not too much to say that if the rightist radicals succeed in their quasi-revolutionary attempts to abort our evolution toward a broader, richer national common weal, this American experiment will be finished. Choice must be made; and it is by no means predetermined which path will be chosen. As Christopher Hill so succinctly writes, "Only very slowly and late have men come to understand that unless freedom is universal it is only extended privilege." That insight has come slowly and late to many Americans.

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Catholics and Population

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to discuss birth control, as I have been doing in recent weeks, without coming to the population question. Here one's attitude on birth control profoundly influences one's approach to the entire subject.

By and large, non-Catholic experts are intent on waking the world to the problem we face. They have a tendency to overstate, to coin scare phrases, even to compare population growth with the multiplication of cancer cells. Their aim is to goad people into action, by sheer fright if necessary.

Catholics, on the other hand, are always highly conscious of the Church's ban on artificial contraception. As a result, they tend to react too strongly in the opposite direction. If non-Catholics sometimes sound as if all our problems would be solved by birth control clinics, Catholics often sound as if all our problems would be solved by finding new sources of food in the sea—or even by shooting men off into outer space.

Both these positions strike me as reactions to opposition rather than efforts to face facts squarely. The population problem is serious enough, heaven knows, without the introduction of partisan distortions.

Today the annual rate of increase in world population is substantially higher than it ever was before, and it is going still higher. When this growth rate is combined with the fact that world population itself is at an all-time high, the annual addition that results is far greater than in any previous period. Thus our population has more than doubled since the time of Malthus, and the prospects are for still greater growth in the immediate future.

This does not mean, of course, that people are having more children than they once did. What it does mean is that more children are living to be adults. Four hundred years ago, life expectancy at birth was probably less than twenty-five years. Today in the U.S. it is nearly seventy years. The Black Death wiped out twenty-five million Europeans; barring the Bomb, the chances for such a catastrophe today are infinitesmal.

In parts of Latin America today, the rate of annual increase runs around three percent, as compared with a rate of one-half to one percent in other eras. Statistically, the difference is staggering. When you have a rate of increase of three percent, it means that a nation's population can double in approximately twenty-five years. The population of Ceylon, for example, increased by almost one-third in the space of only ten years. Obviously such an increase poses great problems for any nation; for a small and impoverished country, they are tremendous.

The pattern of population growth that is now emerging is exactly like that of the European past—with one crucial difference. The population of Western Europe doubled and then doubled again for one reason, the decline in mortality. Exactly the same thing is happening in other parts of the world today, except that it is happening overnight. In the underdeveloped countries modern science has drastically reduced the death rate by the introduction of such things as DDT, but the birth rate is still high. I do not doubt that the birth rate will go down, one way or the other, as it did in Europe, but this will not happen overnight.

The nations where all this is happening are in desperate need of help. Fifteen or twenty years ago, most of them did not exist as nations. Many of them were colonial possessions of the Western powers, with little education and minimal technological and industrial development. In many of them the average annual income amounts to less than two weeks salary for an American worker, and millions of people eat less every day than the average American leaves on his plate.

These countries desperately need to expand their productive capacities. This cannot be done without capital, for machines, for education, for the training of technicians, for the improvement of agriculture. Thus aid and investment from the outside are almost indispensable. In general, a nation growing by three percent a year must save and invest about nine percent of its national income, not to improve its standard of living but just to stay in the same place. In countries with a per capita income of less than one hundred dollars a year, this is just about impossible. Yet if the nine percent or its equivalent from outside is not available, such countries will slide into slow starvation.

It is here, it seems to me, that we ought to be able to find common ground. No matter how many birth control clinics are founded, hunger will be a fact of life in the underdeveloped countries far into the foreseeable future. Those who favor artificial contraception should recognize this fact. And no matter how we perfect agricultural methods and no matter how many new foods we discover in the sea, the population problem is a real one which will press us hard for many decades, perhaps generations. Catholics should recognize this fact too.

Nations facing the population problem in its most acute form are trying to leap over the centuries into modern times, because there is no other hope for them. They will never make it without our help, and on this point it seems to me we can and must unite. We disagree on birth control; we ought to be able to agree on a great international crusade to feed the millions who now face a future of hunger and want. JAMES O'GARA

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The Author as Fiction

THE FIRST SERIES of *Paris Review* interviews with famous writers (*Writers at Work*, Viking) had a good deal of curiosity value. It was a bit like seeing celebrities in the flesh and finding that they look just like their photographs: Faulkner talked just like Faulkner; Forster could almost have been Forster. I suppose the truth is that one only half-believes in public figures: I remember my own amazement a few years ago upon actually seeing a movie star (Jimmy Stewart it was): I suppose I had thought of him as some kind of disembodied hoax, like Donald Duck or Ishkabbible.

But one is soon sated with these wonders, and one volume of *Writers at Work* was surely enough from this point of view. With the second series, unreality sets in again, worse than ever. The interviews have become as stylized as those Hollywood profiles in which one learns that Miss So-and-so likes to cook out of doors and that she re-reads the classics every year; we almost expect to hear that Aldous Huxley prefers to write in an extra-large bed with all the windows open.

Perhaps the real value of this second volume is to underline once and for all the worthlessness of this kind of information. At first it looked as if it might be important to know that Thornton Wilder sharpened twenty pencils before composing. (Or was it Hemingway who sharpened the pencils? Even so, one forgets whether it was Cary Grant or Humphrey Bogart who wore pyjamas.) Now we know, what we should have known sooner, that these details serve mainly to mythologize their subjects and to make them less rather than more real. The news magazines have been on to this trick for some time: nothing obscures a personality so effectively as a barrage of trivial facts.

But mythology also has its interests, and several of the interviews—especially those in which the authors actually seem to be mythologizing themselves—exert a considerable sub-literary spell. The creative rudeness of Perelman and the archness of Frost, the systematic foolishness of Henry Miller and the remains of Ezra Pound's funny-money theories, have a sort of moonshot grandeur to them, and make much better reading than, say, the foibles of Eisenhowers' cabinet (recently described in Emmet John Hughes' sleazy memoir, *The Ordeal of Power*—even the title of which rattles with empty portent.)

Writers are forever constructing mythic alter egos for themselves. The intensity of imagination that combusts into living fiction sometimes secretes these curious by-products: outrageous and irresistible roles and images for the author himself. So you get Henry James, the English squire; Stendhal, the master of hearts, courting Napoleonically, but unsuccessfully, in his smart yellow gloves; Thomas Mann, the twentieth-century Goethe (a construct based on a construct); Scott Fitzgerald imitating socially up and George Orwell imitating down—all, like Thomas Mann's Aschenbach, painting their faces to an impossible beauty: pathetic but, as Mann says, not without glory.

And, of course, you get Ernest Hemingway, who offers surely the most haunting interview in this second series. Hemingway by then had been completely consumed by his alter ego (compare the T. S. Eliot interview for this: Eliot, who seems to have pruned away every mannerism scrupulously, as if personality were some sort of strangling vine; as if some form of death to sell were necessary to artistic survival).

The first thing you notice about the Hemingway dialogue is his mania for challenging everything that has ever been said about him. Let Archibald MacLeish praise him (praise him, mind you) for something, and he can only say, no, Archie got that wrong. Let the interviewer quote Hemingway's own words, and Hemingway will either deny the whole thing or say he was concussed at the time or that he meant something quite different—it is a long badgering exercise to stay on top, and reminds one of Morley Callaghan's comment, after talking to Hemingway in the twenties, that Ernest had to be champion at everything.

You would suppose that such a conversation would be insufferable, that the interviewer would want to go a few rounds with Papa to get his own back (the interviewer is George Plimpton who once went an inning with Willie Mays). But the curious thing is that Plimpton actually goes out of his way to praise the subject's affability and charm. There must have been something in the delivery of these itchy, pugnacious remarks that took the edge off them and gave them an almost friendly effect. Like a big dog rough-housing.

Certainly, Hemingway had more friends than his quoted sayings would account for. Upon re-reading the interview, one realizes even here that he had a nice, fine, clean feeling for the rhythm of combativeness and conciliation that so much masculine friendship depends on.

Scavenging for clues, one realizes that masculine friendship had, in a way, always been his great subject.

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The theme of violence and death was partly a blind for this: violence and death conduce to a more intense comradeship; they connect men in a way that would be impossible and embarrassing in peaceful life. But where a war-glorifier like Belloc celebrates friendship brassily or sentimentally, Hemingway does it with silence and the talismanic sentence.

In the early stories anyway, the key to comradeship was to be physically skillful and to keep quiet: a fine discovery for a shy, graceful man to make. The outsider is always the talker, the person who says the inappropriate thing or makes the wrong comment on the action. ("Won't you please, please, please, please, please stop talking.")

Hemingway's laconic man of action was as pathetic and noble as any writer's alter ego. Unfortunately, the real Hemingway liked to talk. As he got older, the personality thrust itself at his mouth, and you get a curious kind of self-denying garrulity. He still had the key: terseness and understatement. But since he liked to talk, he began producing whole streams of terse, understated sentences. In the Plimpton interview, every answer sounds reluctant, as if there was something epicene about all this chatter—but there is an endless flood of these reluctant answers; every sentence sounds like the only thing he's going to say that day—but you can't ever count on it.

The alter ego, the ideal self, can become in the end a monster, the self the writer has to die to if he wants to keep going. A style perfectly suited to Gary Cooper became a grotesque imposition on an articulate man; and for a writer of Hemingway's extraordinary stature to wish to be taken seriously as a boxer is certainly as touching as Aschenbach painting his face and pursuing his crazy dream all over Venice.

I suppose we would prefer our authors to be as superior to their material as our critics are, but involvement to the point of foolishness usually quite humorless involvement, is the price they pay for having the material at all; detachment writes very few novels.

If Fitzgerald hadn't envied people who were worth about one tenth of himself, hadn't possessed the extraordinary imagination to see glamor in the rich and stupid, we would never have had Gatsby. Hemingway's folly is in the same way inseparable from his art, even to the point where it grew up and choked it. Perhaps there is a similar story to be found in each of the interviews.

WILFRID SHEED

(Mr. Sheed, author of the forthcoming novel, The Hack *[Macmillan], contributes a regular column.)*

CORRESPONDENCE

"The Church and Freedom"

Ponce, Puerto Rico

TO THE EDITORS: Having read Dr. Küng's "The Church and Freedom" in The Commonweal I ask myself "*cui bono?*"

One understands that articles have to open with eye-catching and sensational statements, and perhaps that explains the comparison made between the Catholic and Communist systems, a comparison that is not only odious but most unfair. Anyone could say that a baboon has two eyes, so had Dr. Küng; a baboon has two ears, so has Dr. Küng; a baboon has a mouth and a chin, so has Dr. Küng. The statements would not be false, but the insinuations would be most unfair to Dr. Küng since no account would be taken of the many differences between Dr. Küng and a baboon. But it is just in this way that Dr. Küng finds resemblances between the Catholic and the Communist systems, but fails to express the differences, or if he does so it is only after he has allowed the innuendos to sink in. Dr. Küng finds "striking resemblances" between the Catholic and the Communist systems. But if he accepts, as he should, that the Catholic system exists to spread the truths of Christ's doctrine, whereas the Communist system exists to spread the errors of Marx, Lenin and others, then the terms "absolutist, centralist, totalitarian" take on a new meaning. Are not most parents such?

Dr. Küng's exposition of the doctrine of freedom adds nothing new to the doctrine of the Church since it consists mostly of citations from St. Paul. But I think he is not even fair to St. Paul, since Dr. Küng uses St. Paul to extol the merits of freedom, whereas the intention of St. Paul was to extol the merits of Christ. Then again, Dr. Küng seems to confuse the concepts of freedom and grace. On page 346 of The Commonweal and elsewhere in the article, the "Freedom of God in Christ" is made to look like a special kind of freedom given by the Spirit to members of the Church, whereas the truth is that freedom is God's gift to all men and is radically the same in all men whether they are believers or not. By union with God in Christ men do not receive a new freedom, but grace enlightens the mind so that man's natural freedom is used properly and not abused.

Much of the content of Dr. Küng's article is generalization from insufficient particulars. It makes for exciting reading, but how exact are the assertions? Then, perhaps to be more sensational, Dr. Küng states, "But what is also true is that a Christian has never to accept a dogma of the Church if it would be against his conscience." When thus stressing the freedom of conscience,

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Dr. Küng should in fairness point out its consequences. One is also free to reject first principles or to accept contradictions—which only proves that our freedom can make fools of us. But why pretend that this is some sort of a triumph for freedom?

Naturally the article of Dr. Küng would not be in the style of The Commonweal if it did not take a slap at Spain. Will someone quote for me a single law of Spain which forbids freedom of conscience? We will grant that in Spain for what the Spaniards consider their common good there are laws which restrict public religious manifestations and certain types of propaganda. Similar laws are found in other countries, but it seems that they become a denial of freedom only when the "liberals" examine Spanish laws and customs. Certainly all nations have a right to be interested in what they consider their common good, and the laws of the nation will usually reflect what each nation considers its common good. If Dr. Küng is seeking a common agreement upon what *he* considers the common good, he has a long road to travel.

Unfair generalizations are everywhere in the article, but nowhere more unfair than where he describes or pretends to describe Roman inquisitorial proceedings: "Roman inquisitorial proceedings, in which denunciations are accepted, in which the accusers, the evidence, the order of procedure and all the acts are kept secret, in which the accused is not given a hearing, those who defend him are not admitted, and sentence is passed without stating the grounds for the judgment" . . . Naturally, one cannot accuse Dr. Küng of direct falsehood in these statements since there is always the possibility of some of it being true in rare cases. But certainly it is wrong for Dr. Küng to make these statements in a general way and pretend that they describe the Roman Curia or any part of it. It seems to me that Dr. Küng is himself guilty of doing what he accuses the Roman Curia of doing—accusation and condemnation without giving the accused a chance to present evidence or defend himself.

"The Church and Freedom" could have been an article of great value, since I believe that Dr. Küng has the learning and the skill to have made it such. But the article I have read in The Commonweal suffers from too much innuendo, too many generalizations, too many confused ideas. If Dr. Küng wants to become a shining star in expounding Catholic doctrine, he should give off more light and less heat.

(Most Rev.) James McManus, C.Ss.R.
Bishop of Ponce

"Vietnam Controversy"

Saigon, Vietnam

TO THE EDITORS: Twice in one issue (July 26) of The Commonweal I find myself mentioned, each time in connection with the government-Buddhist dispute in Vietnam. Your editorial writer does not find my reporting worthy of full credence, while your contributor, Henry G. Fairbanks, writing on "Diem and the Buddhists," evidently does. It is noteworthy that Mr. Fairbanks has lived and taught in Vietnam for a year.

In your opinion, "Father O'Connor's stories do not go to the heart of the charges raised in the secular news reports: that indefensible acts of discrimination by the Diem regime are being justified in the name of Catholicism."

I shall be obliged if you will refer me to any news report making that specific charge, which would be a singularly injurious falsehood.

I know, and every newspaper reader must know, that the standard style in "the secular news reports" is to speak of "alleged discrimination by Roman Catholic President Ngo dinh Diem," "discriminatory practices of Ngo dinh Diem's Catholic government," and the like. It is hard to find a news story on the subject that does not mention Ngo dinh Diem's religion.

Correspondents have justified this to me by saying that the President's religion is "relevant." Yes, but in the reader's mind the relevance endlessly emphasized becomes a relevance of cause to effect. The impression is created that the alleged discrimination or worse is directly attributable to the President's religion.

The Buddhists' published statements, as far as I know, have not referred to President Ngo dinh Diem's religion. Buddhist spokesmen have said repeatedly that they do not accuse the Catholic Church or Catholicism.

You cite in about twelve lines a few of the facts I have reported in some fifteen dispatches since mid-May and you say that "the burden of proof is still on the NCWC writer." Would you accept from me as proof any report with which the secular press did not agree? From your comments it appears that you would not.

Have you noticed the secular press beginning now to report some of the facts the NCWC writer reported weeks ago?

You seem to imply that Catholic press reports which "diverge greatly from what the most reputable secular papers report" do not deserve credence.

The choice of criteria of credibility is a proper exercise of personal freedom by editors as well as readers. May I, too, be free to say that, after more than fifteen years as foreign correspondent, I see no justification for presuming that secular papers, no matter how reputable, are more accurate than the Catholic press in reports concerning Catholic interests. Such papers have not necessarily won their repute by their reporting of events and situations of special Catholic significance.

Too often the correspondent for the secular press is honestly ignorant of Catholic principles, Church organization and practice. Too often he does not know where to go for information about them. Too often he is racing

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to meet a deadline in an intensely competitive field. He has to cover all sorts of happenings and cannot take time to specialize in those of Catholic interest. And it must not be presumed that all correspondents are entirely free from prejudices of various kinds.

You describe me as "a roving correspondent" who filed reports "on a recent visit to Vietnam." I am now in the ninth month of my present stay in Vietnam, as my stories filed from this country since last December indicate.

My knowledge of Vietnam dates from 1952, when I spent eight weeks here, in the north and south, during the Indochina war. I returned before the war ended, in 1954, and remained until 1956. I came here twice in 1961 and twice in 1962. I doubt if many of my colleagues in the press corps here have as long an acquaintance with this country.

Your "regret" amounts to questioning the value of Catholic reporting and that of the NCWC News Service in particular. I suggest a simple test, which I can best evaluate if it is in my own field. I have been a full-time foreign correspondent of the NCWC for so long now that events I reported when they happened have already passed into history. Go back over the files of any Catholic paper since 1946. Do you find that my reports from post-war Japan and Korea, from China, from the Korea war, from Vietnam in '52 and '54-'56, from Poland in '56, from the Sudan in '58 and '60, from Laos in '61 and '62, or from anywhere else, have been proved generally unworthy of credence? . . .

In addition, may I remind you that while I have not found proof of a religious persecution of Buddhists, I have reported government faults regarding Buddhist demonstrators? I called the flag decree "short-sighted and ill-timed." After the May 8 tragedy in Hue I said that "the government attitude fell lamentably short of Catholic desires." Later I referred to "the ruthless onslaughts made by the police on bonzes and their supporters. . . . These demonstrators were acting unlawfully, to be sure, but the force used against them was out of all proportion." I spoke of "the government's recent harsh police measures against this (Buddhist) association." I reported also that "some Catholic ecclesiastics seem to have gone too far (in seeking favors from officials) and got too much," adding: "These are favors given locally to individuals. They represent no government program and no general benefit to the Church."

(Rev.) PATRICK O'CONNOR

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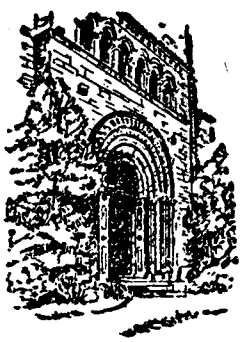

Prospective students should make early application

On Xavier Rynne

Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITORS: In his review of the book *Letters from Vatican City*, Mr. John Leo has evidently followed a false trail. While flattered with the attribution, I am sorry to say that I cannot claim to be the author.

(Rev.) FRANCIS X. MURPHY, C.Ss.R.

Religion and Art

Grosse Pointe, Mich.

TO THE EDITORS: Several times, reading articles in The Commonweal deploring the lack of Catholic scientists, research geniuses, artists and writers, I've been tempted to write a letter, but held back, possibly because I wasn't sure we *shouldn't* have such people flowering from the American Catholic culture. But when I read in the July 12th issue, in Martin E. Marty's "Protestantism-in-Pluralism" a similar lament from the Protestant side, I was certain Americans have fallen into a familiar heresy toward art: that of expecting it to further purposes it was not intended to serve.

In referring to Protestantdom, Mr. Marty says: "The poets of a nation, the custodians of its memory and destiny, are not attracted to the mythos of a *corpus* (author's italics) too comatose to be celebrated, too much alive to be mourned. It still forms too much a part of the environment, but it blends into the background, or has become the background. *Where are the Protestant novelists, artists, musicians poets, playwrights?*" (my italics). "Of course, a few can be named and paraded across the stage. But the very sparseness of the field, the distance between them, the second-rate character of so many, the pains others take to disassociate themselves from institutional religion is a more eloquent witness to the cultural paralysis."

I do not take issue with Mr. Marty's article, but with the attitude of mind it so clearly points up and which we've been getting more and more of on the Catholic side.

Art is not the handmaid of religion, nor the tool of any philosophy. It is the combination of a craft and a vision which "hold . . . the mirror up to nature." Perhaps because we have seen it used so much in totalitarian states for propaganda purposes, we have come to believe it *should* be a weapon in an idealistic fight. But it is important to remember that art serves a truth of its own—indeed, I would say that very Holy Spirit

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which art's critics so often seem to think artists are betraying—and this is a vision of the world and understanding of man's place in it. An artist (using the word in its widest, creative sense) expresses *human* values.

Who, off-hand, could say whether Mozart, Hayden, Beethoven and Mendelssohn were Catholic, Protestant or anything else? Who would claim Michelangelo's Creation of Man as purely Catholic art? Who reads Milton for his Puritan pamphlets or Dante because he is the perfect expression of medieval Catholicism? Who reads the Arabian Nights for their Mohammedan background, or looks at the Diego Rivera murals in Detroit as an expression of Communism? These are not the primary purposes of artists. If France and Spain have Catholic writers and England has Protestant ones; if Russia has Orthodox or atheistic writers, this is because they wrote of people they knew, situations they shared, philosophies they lived with, and these were reflected in their writings. I think it fine if a writer, in the context of his work, can reflect religious or philosophic values. In fact, I find it hard to believe a writer isn't quite a reflection of his own background. But to set out, as Thoreau said, "with goodness aforethought," is automatically to subordinate one's writing truth to one's religious convictions. . . .

MONICA E. PORTER

THE SCREEN

Children's Hour

IN MY LAST column, I gave a hasty rundown on summer films designed for so-called adults. Although the moviemakers haven't done much better in their hot-weather releases for the so-called young fry, here's a quick listing of what's now on our screens for them.

A Gathering of Eagles must have been designed for young people who weren't around when *Command Decision, Twelve O'Clock High* and other films about Air Force commanders and their personnel were occupying our attention. Telling a peacetime story about the Strategic Air Command, this picture has excellent color shots of B-52 jets in the air and on land, and fine scenes showing the Operation Readiness Inspections—all very reassuring. But its plot is so old hat with Rock Hudson as the tough Wing Commander of the 904th, Rod Taylor and Barry Sullivan as friends and officers Rock dismisses because they're not up to perfection, and Mary Peach as Rock's long-suffering wife, that oldsters will think they've seen all this before.

Lancelot and Guinevere, stemming more from Malory than Tennyson with little shilly-shallying about the affair between the Queen and the Knight, couldn't quite make up its mind whether it was aiming at adults or youngsters and finally wound up on a teenage level. Cornel Wilde and Jean Wallace do well enough in the title roles and Brian Aherne is as stiff and likable as King Arthur could possibly be. The script is rather stiff too; but the jousts and battle scenes are done in a lively colorful style that makes the whole picture seem more brisk than it is.

55 Days at Peking wasn't too sure what audience it wanted to appeal to either. Telling the story of the Boxer siege of the international compound in 1900 Peking, the picture never really explains the Boxers or the grabby eleven nations hanging around to push their own advantages in awakening China. A star-studded cast works against odds to put over what plot there is; but the visuals of this Chinese western photographed in Spain should keep the young absorbed.

Flipper knew it was aiming at little kids, and its aim is so good that it should appeal to kids of all ages. Nicely photographed in the Florida Keys, it sets up a healthy father-son relationship (well portrayed by Chuck Connors and young Luke Halpin) and an even more engrossing friendship between the boy and a dolphin. If you don't know what fun and how smart dolphins are, here's your chance to find out. Be sure to take your kids or the neighbors'.

Summer Magic, stemming from Kate Douglas Wiggin's *Mother Carey's Chickens,* is as saccharine as one would expect; and not even Walt Disney's handsome production, with a good cast led by Hayley Mills, Dorothy McGuire, and Burl Ives can make it palatable. Very little tots, however, unless they are already reading *The Catcher in the Rye,* should eat it up.

Tarzan's Three Challenges has Jock Mahoney again as the new, educated Ape-man, Woody Strode as an athletic villain, and some fine shots of Thailand where the picture was filmed. The plot isn't much, and kids may wonder how Africa is getting along without their hero, but they will find he's just as entertaining and enterprising in Asia as elsewhere.

Captain Sindbad may prove a disappointment to boys and girls who have a right to expect more from its title and its producers (the King Brothers) who have done right by them before. The picture, made in Munich, has some imaginative sets and costumes in the *Arabian Nights* style, but its plot is so pedestrian and its cast is so unenthusiastic that the whole thing is rather flat. Some of the technical tricks and magic are fun, however.

Jason and the Argonauts mixes myths and gods and heroes on a grand scale, and if it inspires young people to return to Bulfinch, it will have accomplished a worthy purpose. In the meantime they will find enough adventure and excitement in this pseudo-Greek extravaganza to hold their interest. They could do worse.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG

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The Negro Writer: A Long, Painful Search for Identity

Soon, One Morning: New Writing by American Negroes, 1940-1962. Edited by Herbert Hill. Knopf. $6.95.

by Saul Maloff

IN HIS introduction to *Soon, One Morning* Herbert Hill, its editor (who is labor secretary of the NAACP), attempts to place American Negro literature within a historical frame. He proposes that we see it as a process of maturation from parochialism and protest—a kind of regional or folk literature with an obsessive theme—through a stage of uneasy aestheticism and partial loss of identity in the "Negro Renaissance," to its present emergence into the mainstream of contemporary letters as a fully modern literature of "alienaton," without hyphens or modifiers. In this anthology Mr. Hill is concerned only with the last of these and he gives us a rich sense of its nature and variousness. Literature, however, seldom complies with theories about it, writers being notoriously idiosyncratic; and while Negro literature has undergone radical changes in the course of its history—along with all other literature, and nearly everything else, save for the circumstances of American life which compel its existence—this anthology tells its own story in its own voice.

The collection is divided into three unequal parts—essays, fiction, and poetry—and is, at once, an anthology in the usual sense; a collection of works-in-progress; and a collection of pieces written specifically for this occasion. Thus, some of the work will be familiar to anyone who cares about contemporary American writing; some of it is more likely to be familiar to readers with a special interest in Negro writing; and some—both by well-known and scarcely-known writers—appears in print for the first time. There are some surprising omissions (for example, William Kelley, John Williams, Lorraine Hansberry) but for the most part the writers are precisely those we would expect to find represented, inevitably Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Willard Motley, Chester Himes (and, posthumously, Richard Wright), among others—by any standards and in any context an impressive array.

Yet any anthology, unless it is given over entirely to the masters of a major tradition or genre, is bound to be uneven. (Imagine an anthology, say, of Jewish writing which included Bellow, Malamud and Roth along with Uris, Wouk and Stone.) This one is no exception.

One can't help playing the old anthology game of making one's own, of second-guessing the editor; but surely it was a mistake to include a long excerpt from Baldwin's well-known and readily-available first novel, *Go Tell It On the Mountain*, where short stories are available. On the brighter side, it was a great stroke of luck for the editor and for us that Ralph Ellison made available a long narrative, which can stand vividly alone but which was in fact part of the original manuscript of *Invisible Man*—" . . . a *riff* (in Ellison's words) on the old theme of 'Ain't Life the Damnedest?' " It reminds us, if reminders are necessary, that Ellison is one of our finest writers.

Ann Petry is represented by a sometimes moving novella; and there is some fiction by new writers, excerpts from novels-in-progress, which promise well. Baldwin contributed some letters written during his travels which reflect, sometimes with great poignancy, the obsessions which were to be given beautiful expression in his published essays—notes on the themes of homelessness, exile, estrangement, on what it means to be an American Negro, an artist, and a man alive in this time.

Perhaps the most interesting essay in the volume—St. Clair Drake's "Hide My Face?"—is an inquiry into the meaning of cultural Pan-Africanism and of the term *négritude* (which has been given wide currency by the Haitian poet Aimé Césaire and the Senegalese poet and thinker Léopold Senghor)—a term rich in implication and suggestiveness, and as elusive as the term "Jewishness." It is the kind of word that can provide all the room in the world for every sort of excess, and every sort of nonsense and truth has been and will be spoken in its name: it serves equally the purposes of poet and demagogue,

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visionary and ranter. The term had to come into existence; that it should originate with the poets of Negro liberation movements is beautifully apt. The idea will need domestication by American Negro intellectuals (Senghor, for example, burdens it with some eery notions of biology and anthropology which can serve racist ends); but the theme itself is, after all, what Negro literature is obsessively about: what being Negro is like, and what it is like to be a Negro.

To the extent that Negro, like Jewish, writers, have given us some of our most compelling metaphors for the condition of being outside, on the margins or the netherside of society, they may be said to represent a defining aspect of modern sensibility: to that extent we are all Negroes. In that sense, certainly, the preoccupation with *négritude* is in no way parochial; the quest for "identity" is our general obsession and we are all catching up with what Negroes have long known. Only the "inauthentic" Negro writer can write about anything else; and only Mr. Bull Connor, who must sometimes know what he is, is not a Negro.

Some anthologies converge upon history, have an importance which exceeds their intrinsic value, an importance conferred upon them in part by the moment in which they appear. No one can help being aware that this anthology comes at the moment in history of Birmingham and Jackson; that is justification enough for bringing this book out now. Negro writers need no apologizing for; we may expect to hear more from them every year, until we arrive at that time when they will be required reading in the schools of cities which in this year of grace believe that the only good Negro writer is a dead one.

A Bright Spark

The Month of the Falling Leaves. By Bruce Marshall. Doubleday. $3.50.

by Edwin Kennebeck

THIS IS a small tale with many complications, a comedy with Overtones. It has many of the familiar Bruce

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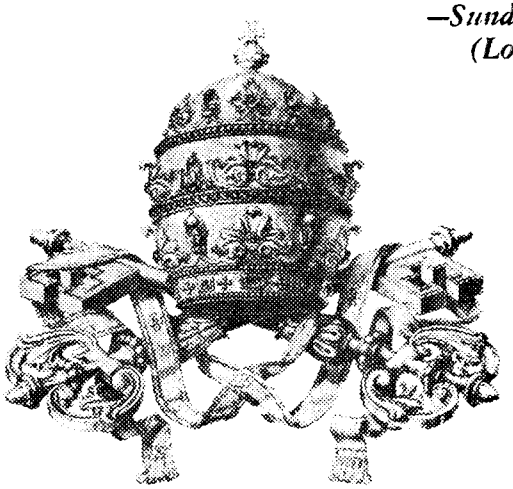

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Marshall elements: the wistfully aging male as central character, something of a fool but more sensitive than most people to the evils and paradoxes of the world; the playful, and often overworked repetition of odd phrases; a sage preoccupation with religion that somehow never permeates the story as it seems meant to; the authentic-sounding rendering of milieu—Poland, in this case—pictured with a sharp knowledgeability, grace, casualness and wit.

The Month of the Falling Leaves seems especially familiar because it has much in common with Marshall's *The Girl from Lübeck*, published last year, in which a British member of an international literary society in Paris became involved—by mistake—in a spy plot. In the new novel, a British author—a philosopher—goes on a relatively innocent mission to Warsaw, to lecture and also to try to pick up some of his royalties. Between his real illegalities—trying to exchange his zlotys for pounds and dollars through a Warsaw harlot—and his inadvertent ones—being taken for a British spy both by the Polish and the British agents—Harold Hilliard has several adventures which are diverting enough except at moments when they degenerate into such passages as: "If Karminski were having him trailed and learned that he met a man at the gates of the Powaski military cemetery Hilliard would never be able to make Karminski believe that he had been unable to contact Sardine . . .," which means more in context than out of it, but not enough more.

The learned Marshall charm has by no means failed entirely, though, and his fans will enjoy its operations. The evocation of the mood of Warsaw is affecting: "The grim streets through which they were now passing might have been the loveless canyons leading into Paris or Milan and the coupled red tramcars, the blistered chariots of newly liberated Vienna. Even the new broad thoroughfares in the center of the city were as devoid of glory as the boulevards of Wichita and Cincinnati. Ideology perhaps was no more than a quarrel about how to call despair hope." The Polish spy's fondness for English slang is modestly amusing; when Karminski says "There is a fly in the ointment" or "You cross your heart and hope to die?" these remarks take on a new flavor. Still, there are too many repetitions, too many broad strokes of humor—even an outright pratfall as Our Heroine makes her entrance.

The heroine is a pleasant young girl, a vivacious and devoted Catholic, who occasionally expresses her concern for the Church in Poland—"the priest says it's the duty of all loyal Poles to stay behind in Poland and convert the Government and their superiors, if not by word of mouth, at least by our good example." This note suggests that Marshall may have meant his brief story to gather light and illuminate a large area of concern; it remains, however, only a bright spark.

REVIEWERS

Saul Maloff is a member of the faculty at Bennington College, Vermont.

Edwin Kennebeck is on the staff of a leading New York publishing house.

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Medieval Theology

The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism. By Heiko A. Obermann. Harvard University Press. $9.25.

by George H. Tavard

THIS outrageously-priced book is so entitled to express the author's conviction that the theology of Gabriel Biel and Nominalism in general mark high points of medieval thought rather than, as usually accepted, its decadence. After reading his scholarly volume, I cannot conclude that the common opinion is mistaken, or that Joseph Lortz exaggerated when he wrote that Nominalism was "radically uncatholic." As it appears here, the Nominalism of Gabriel Biel overstresses the importance of philosophical considerations in theology, includes bulky Pelagian elements and favors an excessive Mariology. Obermann paradoxically champions

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Biel as an eminent representative of medieval Catholicism, while including under the concept 'Catholicity' a number of opinions that are less than Catholic. This thought-process is particularly damaging in the chapter on Biel's concept of Tradition: in the light of Biel's doctrines, which separate Scripture and extra-scriptural traditions as independent sources of faith, Obermann takes for granted an interpretation of the Council of Trent which has been rejected by most Catholic historians.

Students of medieval thought will find this study useful, provided they have enough determination to plow through the first half, which is particularly hard to follow. However, they may well be irked by occasional lapses from objectivity, as when the Popes' sojourn in Avignon is called the Babylonian captivity of the papacy, and by the use of terms with little or no theological content, like "democratization of mysticism," "aristocrats of the spirit." They should also be on their guard against viewing as Biel's discovery doctrines that are commonplace in Catholic spirituality, like the doctrine of the "inhabitation of the Holy Spirit" in the souls of all who are in the state of grace. The author's enthusiasm for his subject has at times led him to forget the proper perspectives: this mars a painstaking and scholarly study.

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The Commonweal Idea

WHAT SPECIAL PLACE can a weekly journal of opinion edited by laymen fill? . . . As a lay-edited magazine The Commonweal has no "official" status within the Church. It cannot speak for the Church nor can it pretend to claim that its editorial views represent even an unofficial consensus. It is a "Catholic publication" only in the sense that its editors are Catholic laymen whose judgments are informed by their dedication to their religious convictions.

Yet in the thirty-eight years since its founding, the editors of The Commonweal have never looked upon its unofficial status as a handicap. On the contrary it has served to emphasize a vital requirement of Catholic life: that in his day-to-day life the Christian is called upon to apply, as a fallible man, his religious principles to the flux and flow of human events. As a Catholic he has the help of the teaching authority of the Church, whose obligation it is to enunciate and explain those principles. In the end, however, it is the individual himself who must apply them, who must give them life and relevance in the market-place.

Thus when The Commonweal speaks out on a specific problem of the temporal order—on "public affairs, literature and the arts"—it does not represent *the* Catholic position, but only *a* Catholic position. At times, no doubt, the views of the editors may closely tally with those of a majority of American Catholics; but at other times—and they are not infrequent—they may be shared by very few. Such considerations of popularity are irrelevant. What matters is that our opinions make some contribution to the common good. In this sense, controversy and debate have been inherent in our role. That is as it should be: vigorous debate is crucial for free men. . . .

If the problems of American Catholics have changed drastically over the years, one change is especially noteworthy. Prior to the 1950's—though a great residue remains—American Catholics were prone to be defensive about their religion. There were good reasons for this: the forces of nativism seemed a permanent part of American life. What this meant was that a considerable part of Catholic thought was devoted to showing the compatibility of Catholicism and democracy. It also meant that Catholics were apt to ignore their own deficiencies.

In recent years, much of this has changed. For the first time, American Catholics are now willing to take a close look at their own performance, to measure their ideals against the reality of their actions. At the same time, a new awareness of the importance of the laity in the Church has burst upon the scene with astonishing force. Taken together these changes have meant a period of intense ferment, of bold thought and an honest examination of conscience. . . .

It is this drive for confrontation which has earned for The Commonweal the reputation of being a "liberal" weekly. It is not a description we would disavow. On the contrary, as nothing else ever could, the great wisdom of Popes Pius XII and John XXIII seems to us to have swept away forever the notion that the Catholic must only protect and preserve; or that the modern world is alien to the Church. No: the Catholic must be a "man for all seasons." That is what we stand for.

—from the February 15th issue

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